



INNOVATIVE TEACHING FOR EUROPEAN MUSEUM STRATEGIES

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Report From [APECV - Portugal](#)

1. Presence of art and art history teaching in Portuguese national educational system

The Portuguese educational system is separated in Basic and Secondary Education, as follows:

Basic:

1. Pre-school (3-5years old)
2. 1st cycle (6-9/10)
3. 2nd cycle (10-11/12)
4. 3rd cycle (12-13/14)

Secondary:

5. Secondary (14-17/18 years old)

Art education is compulsory in the curriculum from pre-school until the end of the third cycle. In pre-school and first cycle, history of arts approaches may be integrated in the artistic expressions area. In the second cycle history of arts approaches may be integrated in the subject of Visual and Technological Education and, in the third cycle, in Visual Education or optional subjects like Studio Art that some schools may offer. But it is very much up to the teachers to include knowledge and understanding of history of art in their teaching strategies and educational projects.

In Secondary school (14-17/18 years old) art education is an optional choice for those who want to attend art courses in universities or entering in vocational art and design courses. In these courses *History of Culture and Arts* is an optional subject (6 hours per week during two years). History of Art contents might also be included in the art appreciation component of Studio Art, Multimedia and Drawing Subjects, but in a very superficial way.

Many current textbooks in subjects such as Portuguese, History, and Philosophy have reproductions of art works. And the subject of History in Basic Education (1st, 2nd and 3rd cycles) can include some knowledge and facts about History of Art.

2. Present relationship between schools and museums in the context of educational purposes

Because school students are a great percentage of visitors, museums usually provide special activities for schools, in their annual plans. The great majority of the activities are guided and oriented tours adapted to the different age levels. In many cases the visits are complemented by written texts and workshops. The workshops are intended to have playful-pedagogical characteristics integrating visual arts production, games and experimenting with traditional art materials and technologies. Museums also celebrate special dates. Some museums also launch contests for students.

Arts Museums, Industrial Museums, Design, Science and Technology Museums and other museums offering a wide array of patrimony and artefacts are very active in the Portuguese contemporary cultural offer. Many of them are playing a pioneer role in the proposed activities offered to schools. The Contemporary Art Museum Graça Morais offers well designed playful visits for students and public conversations with contemporary artists. Museu Berardo, for example, like many others provide thematic visits, spaces for conversation and debate, games and workshops, furthermore the educational services provide to schools continuity by helping students and teachers to develop works after the visits.

The objectives of museum activities are related to the promotion of the museum collections, taking into account, in some degree, public interests such as cultural heritage education, civic education, awareness of cultural patrimony and natural resources. The activities intend to engage the public in dialogue through games and ‘hands on’ experiences (Eça *et al* 2008). Some national and city museums reveal concerns with the democratisation of culture by promoting events to receive the visitors in a more inclusive way. Art museums reveal a commitment to promote direct contact of visitors with art works and are engaged with aesthetic appreciation tasks and some art criticism activities, they often look for establishing stronger relationships with schools.

Partnerships between museums and schools are always one direction relationships. The museum's technicians design and supervise the activities and teachers and schools are invited to participate, for example the educational programmes for schools at the foundation Serralves (Leite & Victorino, 2009). There are also some described examples of activities designed by schools and teachers (Eça & Morais, 2011) and in that case the museum offers the space to perform them. We seldom find activities designed by teachers and museum's technicians together in a peer relationship.

Museums going to schools is not a common strategy. Few museums have such practices, maybe because they lack human resources. Some museums use outsourcing strategies in the design of pedagogical and advertising material for schools in order to increase audiences.

The Ministry of Education started a new art education programme for schools in infant school and primary school level in 2010/2011, a number of 5000 children are esteemed to be involved. The programme intends to reinforce museum –schools partnership involving children, teachers and families. It is too soon to evaluate results, but we are looking forward to observe its development.

Another top-down activity was launched in 2006 by the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Culture to promote awareness of national museums collections. The most recent title of the activity is ‘My school adopts a museum, a palace, a

monument...'. The activity is a contest for schools. Students with the help of their teachers submit written, visual or multimedia work about objects from the museum collection.

Teachers' in-service training courses, contests and students' exhibitions promoted by the Art Teachers Association APECV are also worth to mention. Each year the national annual contest focus on the visual interpretation of one Portuguese artist work. APECV programme 'Arts Education and Community' initiated in 2009, is a pilot programme to increase the interest of art teachers in working with museums. In 2010 a B-learning course at Museu Soares dos Reis used visual culture concepts to approach paintings by Henrique Pousão belonging to the museum collection. In 2011 one more traditional learning course at Museu de Arte Antiga uses art sketchbooks to approach the museum collection.

3. Activities for teachers within the context of museums

Portuguese museums, foundations and cultural centres have many activities targeting school students and families. For example [Museu da Imagem](#); [Museu José Malhoa](#); [Museu Berardo](#); [Tesouro-Museu da Sé de Braga](#); [Museu Convento dos Lóios – Santa Maria da Feira](#); [Museu da Água Lisboa](#); [Museu Municipal de Montijo](#); [MUDE Museu do Design e da Moda](#); [Museu de Santa Maria de Lamas](#); [Museu Geológico](#); [Museu da Cerâmica](#); [Centro Português de Fotografia Porto](#); [Museu de Arqueologia e Numismática de Vila Real](#); [Museu do Pão](#); [Museu dos Transportes e Comunicações](#); [Museu Carlos Machado/Museu Movel Açores](#); [Museu Grao Vasco](#); [Museu da Marioneta](#); [Museu do Papel- Santa Maria da Feira](#); [Museu de Portimão](#); [Museu de Caminha](#), [Casa das Histórias](#); and [Culturgest](#). We must, here, refer to the excellent work done in the Gulbenkian Foundation: [Descobrir Programa Gulbenkian Educação para a Cultura](#) but we cannot forget that smaller institutions at local levels are also conducting excellent educational projects for example the train museum [Fundação Museu Nacional Ferroviário](#). And [Museu da Guarda](#), a museum in a small city from a rural region of the country.

Very few cultural institutions offer programmes for teachers and when they exist it is more about promoting their activities rather than asking advices to teachers.

This is not surprisingly since the educational discourses and agendas of teachers and museum educators are extremely differentiated. Usually the museums propose their planned activities for schools and teachers, and if they want, teachers integrate them in their curriculum practice at a school or department planning level. We are inclined to think that the relationship between museums and schools could have better educational impact with joint planning activities assured by team work between museum educators and school teachers.

4. Listing Relational Problems

Even though museums are interested in strengthening relationships with schools, there are many problems in the communication with schools. The information sent to schools seldom arrive to teachers in time, teachers time planning is very different from museums time planning. And in certain cases the target teachers don't receive it, schools are big institutions with many teachers and post and mailing is not always delivered.

Museums complain about teachers who do not require the visits in time, and in that case they cannot provide assistance. They also refer that sometimes the teacher who organised the visit is not the accompanying teacher for the visit and this may raise some disruption. There are complains about expected numbers and real numbers of students and problems of teachers and students' punctuality in the visits as well as complains about inappropriate student behaviour during the visits. And of course the problems of excessive numbers of students and reduced time available for the visits, because when teachers move students they need to move them in large groups in order to fill buses and they need to move fast.

So, all this together results in lack of motivation to make visits for teachers and on a decrease of visits quality for museum educators. Museums and schools agree that the preparation of the plans for the annual activities is always made in a short period of time, not enabling designing the educational programmes in advance. Schools departments are sometimes inflexible in their curriculum planning and museums information is not always received during the planning calendars. So this

makes a very difficult relationship and many schools are not interested in opening up their activities to museums.

However, In the small scale questionnaire to museums, used to write this report, from the twenty three replies some respondents said not having problems of the kind. Some museums have great demands from schools, and they don't have resources to answer to such demands. So they limit the number of visits to maintain the quality of reception. A meaningful number of respondents described interesting practices for schools and refer they don't have difficulties in the relationship with schools.

5. Use of ICT

The Museums with digital technological equipment use it to make multimedia projections to complement the exhibitions. In the workshops they use it as tools for art production or to project videos and animations.

Almost all the museums have an Internet site or a blog, a few have a newsletter where they promote their activities and collection. The blogs are mainly managed by educational services. Some internet sites have interactive games related to the collection and history of the museum. Virtual tours are not very often provided, however there are some, for example Museu Grão Vasco. A few provide information to prepare further visits for teachers and students, in some cases visitors must login and registration in the site is required. Interactive platforms are not used at all, but social networks such as Facebook start to be very popular to advertise and disseminate museum information. Touch screen, PDAs and video guides are seldom used in museums and audio guides are only available in very few, this requires financial resources the great majority of national and city museums do not have.

An innovative project with ICT is running in the Calouste Gulbenkian foundation, through the Programme Education for Culture – Discovery, it is the Mobile Lab, an interactive mobile laboratory allowing to establish connections between sound, gesture and images, for example creating musical notations from drawings and body movements.

5. Conclusions

We acknowledged some problems in the relationship between schools and museums. Schools have bureaucratic procedures causing teachers lack of motivation to go with students to museums, they also lack efficient reception of information received from museums. However, there are many teachers who despite the difficulties promote students encounters with museum collections. They have to overcome a long list of constrains to have the visit approved by the school, plan a day programme, manage the travel details, obtain the parents' permissions and put fifty pupils in a bus to spend eight hours accompanying them, with all the accrued responsibility and without any professional reward. Teachers who are volunteers to have such extra responsibilities and extra work must be credited and their effort might not be minimised.

In their side the great majority of museums struggle with lack of resources and bureaucracies. The economical crisis and political lack of interest for culture have several consequences in museum activities for schools. Working as a museum educator is an unstable profession, and the work of creative conception of the activities is not often paid . Museum educators don't have facilities to attend training courses. Furthermore due to the professional instability many museum educators are working in part-time or as a second job (Oliveira, 2010).

However museums should make an effort to refine their practices, they seem to be very closed to the community, especially to schools. Furthermore museum educators and teachers seem not be interested in dialogical relationships. Joint actions should be implemented, in a way that teachers and museum educators could learn from each other in a peer relationship. Such actions could easily be conducted through professional training courses for both parts. Teachers voices should be make more visible as Ricard Huerta (2011) pointed out in his recent book 'Maestros y Museos'. And in the other side museum educators should be valued by their employers as important elements in museum life.

Such measures could increase educators and teachers skills and confidence in the planning and managing activities with museum resources. A short term impact would be increasing museum audiences. And as a medium term impact this would increase students motivation and students cultural awareness.

However, we need to acknowledge that there are many good practices in the relationship between Portuguese museums and schools, namely those involving students contests which include large numbers of pupils, a benefit for museum entrances levels, and, a benefit for students who acquire new knowledge through museum collections.

In terms of ICT in Museums, we observe a growing generalisation of the new technologies and internet use especially in relation to mailing lists, newsletters and social networks to advertise the public.

February, 2011-02-15, Teresa Eça & Marta Ornelas (APECV)

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[Descobrir Programa Gulbenkian Educação para a Cultura](#)

[Museu da Água Lisboa](#)

[Museu Municipal de Montijo](#)

[MUDE Museu do Design e da Moda](#)

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[Museu da Marioneta](#)

[Museu do Papel](#) Santa Maria da Feira

[Museu de Portimão](#)

[Fundação Museu Nacional Ferroviário](#)

[Museu da Guarda](#)